

# SaaS Sprawl Snapshot

Costs, challenges, and consequences

# When software solves everything — until it doesn't

Software has long been the engine powering modern business. Specifically, software as a service (SaaS) tools have become the go-to choice for organizations of all sizes, especially mid-market companies (250–2,500 employees), thanks to their low barrier to entry, agility, domain expertise, and other benefits. And, when you think about it, there is rarely a problem that some specialized piece of software can't solve.

But as businesses race to adopt new tools to stay competitive, a hidden problem is growing beneath the surface: software sprawl. The ease of SaaS adoption has fueled a bottom-up buying frenzy, leading to shadow IT, fragmented governance, and little oversight for consolidation. What was meant to boost productivity is now eroding it — bloating budgets, creating redundancies, and undermining operational cohesion. At the same time, IT teams now have to address significant visibility gaps, data exposure, and overburdened support.

To quantify this issue, Nintex surveyed 2,000 IT decision-makers from mid-market organizations across four countries: Australia, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

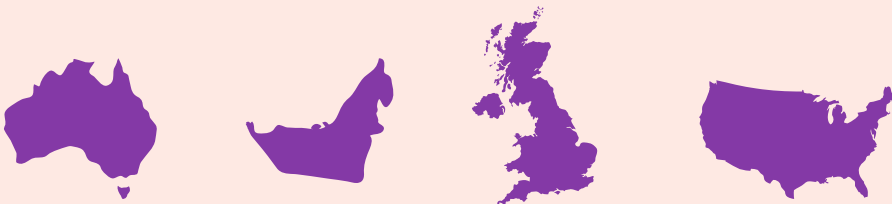
## The results reveal a global efficiency crisis for organizations, one that demands immediate action from IT leaders.

This report uncovers the **true cost of SaaS sprawl**, breaks down country-specific trends, and outlines a roadmap for regaining control in an era of runaway software growth.

2,000

IT decision-makers surveyed

ACROSS 4 COUNTRIES



# What is SaaS Sprawl?

When a company ends up using too many different apps / tools and without a clear plan. Individual teams pick their own software without checking what others are using. Over time, you get a mess of overlapping programs.

## THIS LACK OF COORDINATION LEADS TO:



Wasted money



Siloed data



Slowed productivity



Increased security risks

# A growing, global software storm

## The full picture

While each country varies slightly, the impact of SaaS sprawl globally generally follows three themes:

- 1. Overwhelmed and under-resourced IT teams
- 2. Lack of system integration and process orchestration
- 3. High hopes for AI to solve every business problem

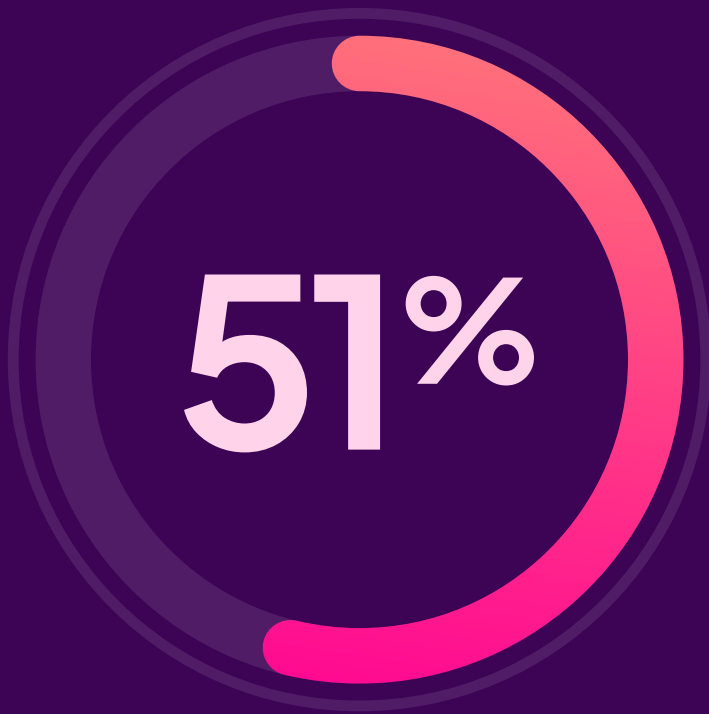
When combined, these conditions have created the perfect software storm that continues to grow in intensity. The data paints a clear picture: Around the world,

organizations are struggling to navigate this storm and are looking for a solution that will allow them to find calmer seas as soon as possible.

On average across the four countries, 51% of mid-market organizations report having between 100 and 300 SaaS tools in their tech stack. 41% are adding new tools every one to three weeks, surpassing their capacity to govern them effectively.

With large tech stacks that continue to grow, most organizations face challenges when it comes to end-to-end system integration. In fact, 90% of organizations claim their SaaS tools are at least mostly integrated, **but only 35% say that their tech stack is entirely integrated.**

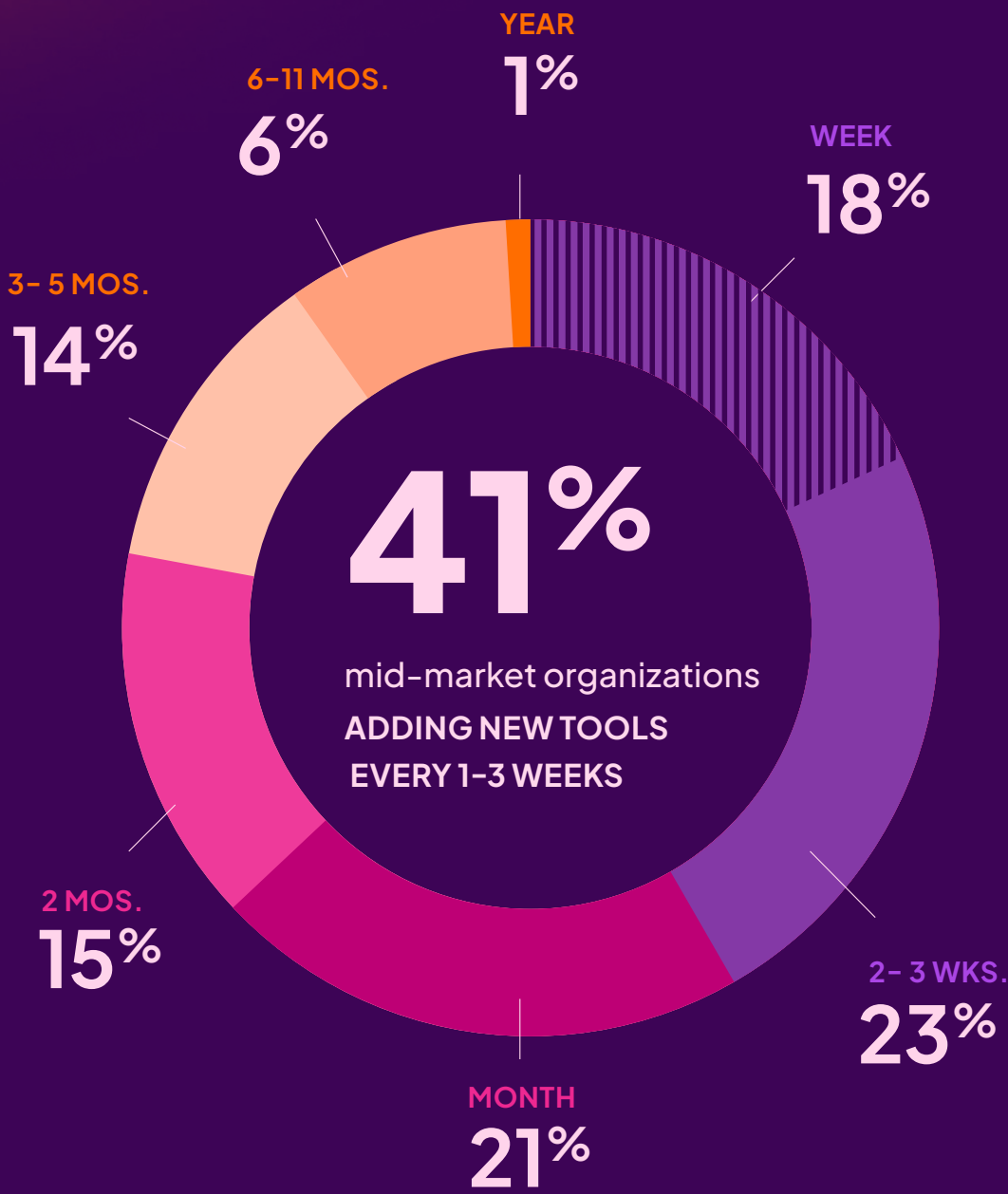
The breadth (and lack) of connection between SaaS systems has created impacts that are felt across finance



mid-market organizations report having between **100 and 300** SaaS tools in their tech stack



Organizations are adding new tools  
**once every...**

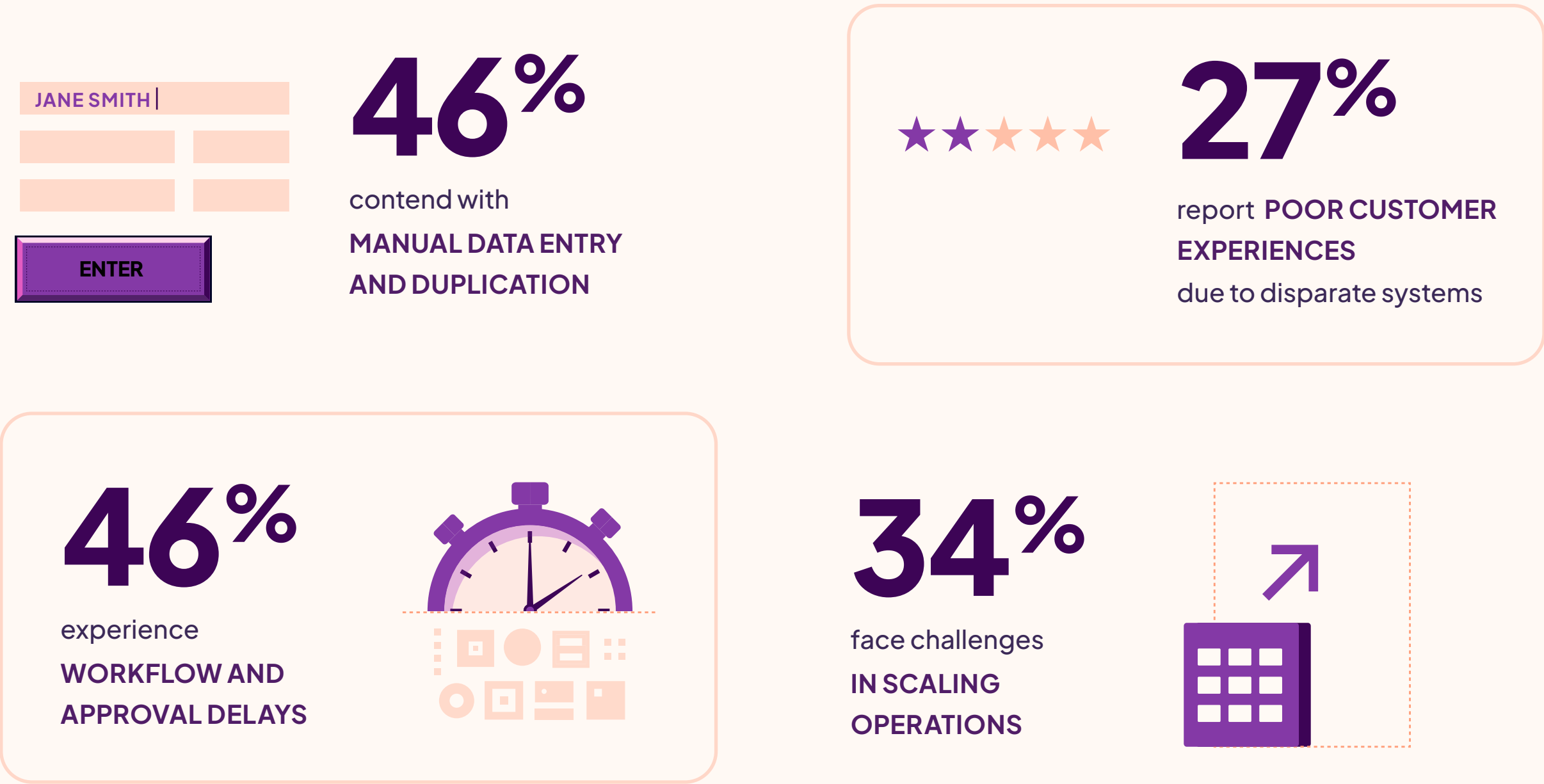


and operations. 87% of all mid-market IT leaders indicate that software sprawl has a moderate to major impact on their budgets.

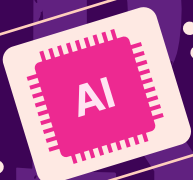
SaaS sprawl isn’t just a budget and IT management issue — it’s a business problem that affects operational efficiency, growth potential, and customer satisfaction.

Ultimately, IT leaders around the world (96%) believe that addressing software sprawl is a moderate or high priority. **55% of IT leaders consider solving software sprawl a core part of their job description.**

The disconnect between SaaS systems is also slowing down the flow of work:







# PROCESS

“No amount of AI or SaaS tools can fix a broken process...”

NIRANJAN VIJAYARAGAVAN,  
CHIEF PRODUCT OFFICER

Half of organizations report that they are using AI to combat SaaS sprawl. Of those organizations, **77% are using AI to analyze software usage**. Organizations also reported leveraging AI to automatically detect and map SaaS applications in use, analyze license usage, and automate software integration.

Still, despite addressing software sprawl as a top priority with emerging technology, inefficient processes continue to stand in the way.

### 1 in 3 IT leaders report that their current process orchestration remains ineffective.

According to Niranjan Vijayaragavan, Chief Product Officer at Nintex, “No amount of AI or SaaS tools can fix a broken process. Chasing efficiency with a sprawling tech stack is like building on shifting sands — today’s quick wins become tomorrow’s operational risks. Real progress demands more than tools; it requires intentional process and policy redesign, intelligent workflow orchestration, and a strong, integrated foundation.”

## The snapshot

Around the world, mid-market organizations are struggling to manage ballooning SaaS ecosystems — many with over 100 tools and new additions happening weekly. Despite high hopes for AI, fragmented processes, poor orchestration, and under-resourced IT teams are holding back real progress. The result is a global software storm that’s draining budgets, stalling workflows, and straining operations.

Around the world, mid-market organizations are struggling to manage ballooning SaaS ecosystems.

100+  
NEW TOOLS AND  
ADDITIONS WEEKLY



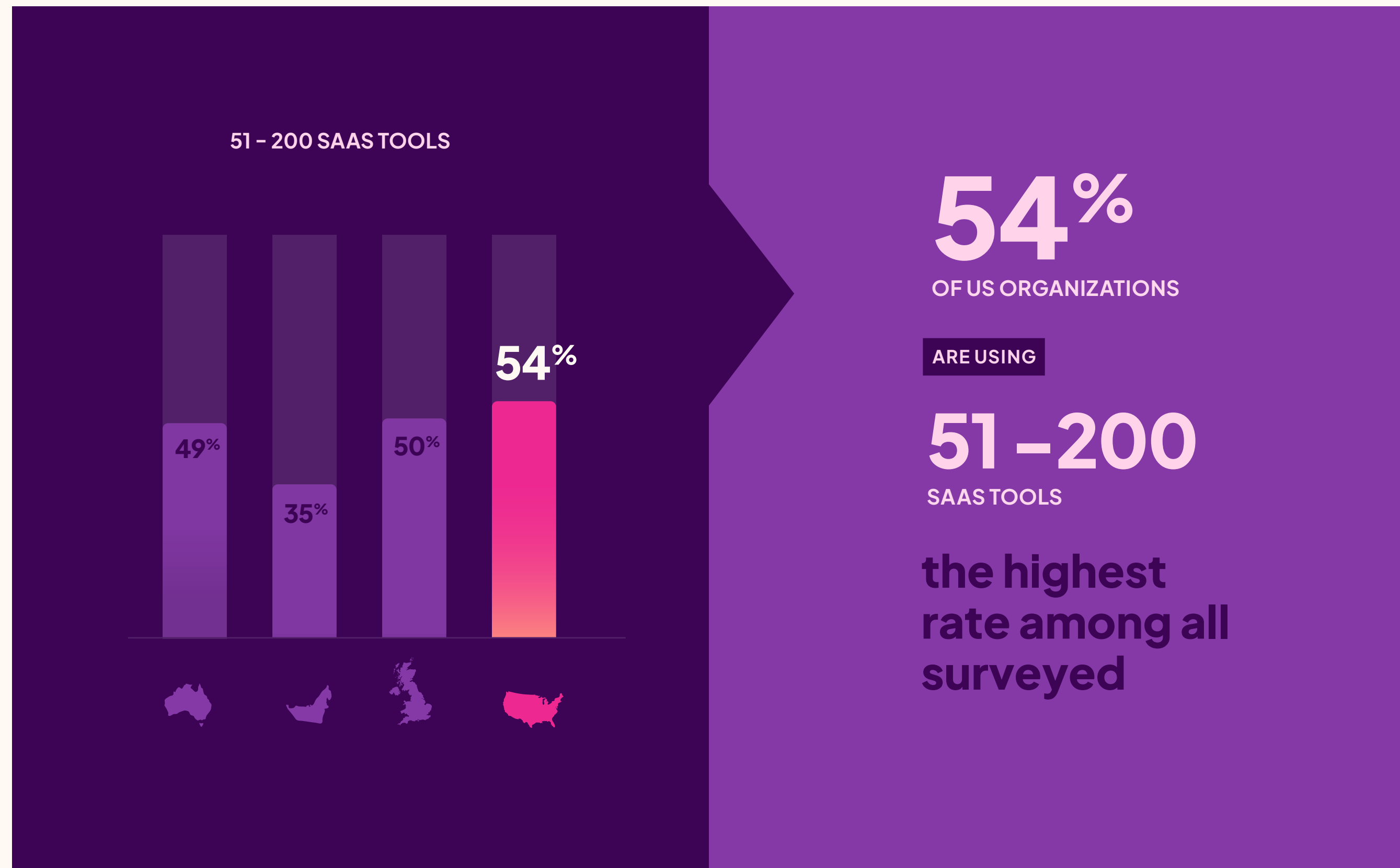
# United States: Land of the free, home of the sprawl

## The full picture

Freedom to choose has long fueled American innovation, but in the world of SaaS, that same freedom is creating a wave of complexity. More than half (54%) of organizations surveyed have 51 to 200 SaaS tools in their stack, and nearly a third (30%) are adding new tools weekly — the highest rate among all countries surveyed.

This unchecked expansion is taking a toll. **88% of US IT decision-makers report that software sprawl is having a moderate to major financial impact** on their organization, with nearly one in four (24%) saying software sprawl is resulting in redundant IT spending. The pressure is even greater among larger mid-market organizations where 93% cite financial strain.

Beyond the budget, sprawl is dragging down operations. IT leaders cite workflow delays (46%), increased manual entry and data duplication (46%), inconsistent reporting (37%), and difficulty scaling (34%) as direct outcomes. Nearly a third (27%) also blame disconnected systems for a poor customer experience.



Yet perception doesn't always match reality. While 98% of U.S. IT leaders say their SaaS tools are integrated, one in three (33%) admit their orchestration is ineffective. And, although 96% say tackling SaaS sprawl is a moderate or high priority — and over half (55%) say it's central to their role — nearly half (49%) say that they lack the IT strategy and resources to deal with it.

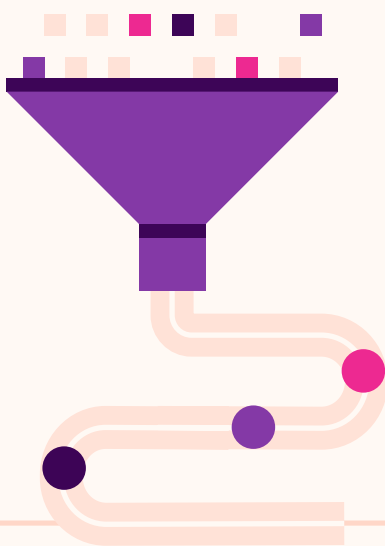
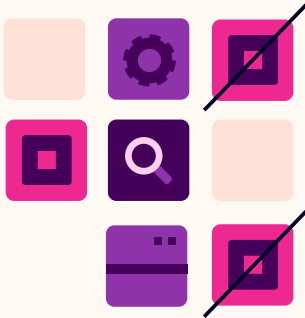
The response? A shift toward control. Many IT teams are taking a multi-pronged approach to slow the sprawl.

AI is the frontrunner when it comes to potential solutions. Half of all US mid-market companies now use AI to address SaaS sprawl, rising to 56% among larger firms.

The most **COMMON USE CASES** are highly practical:

77%

USE AI TO ANALYZE USAGE  
and flag redundant apps

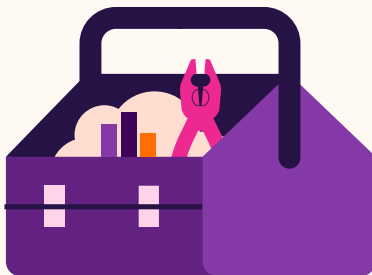


67%

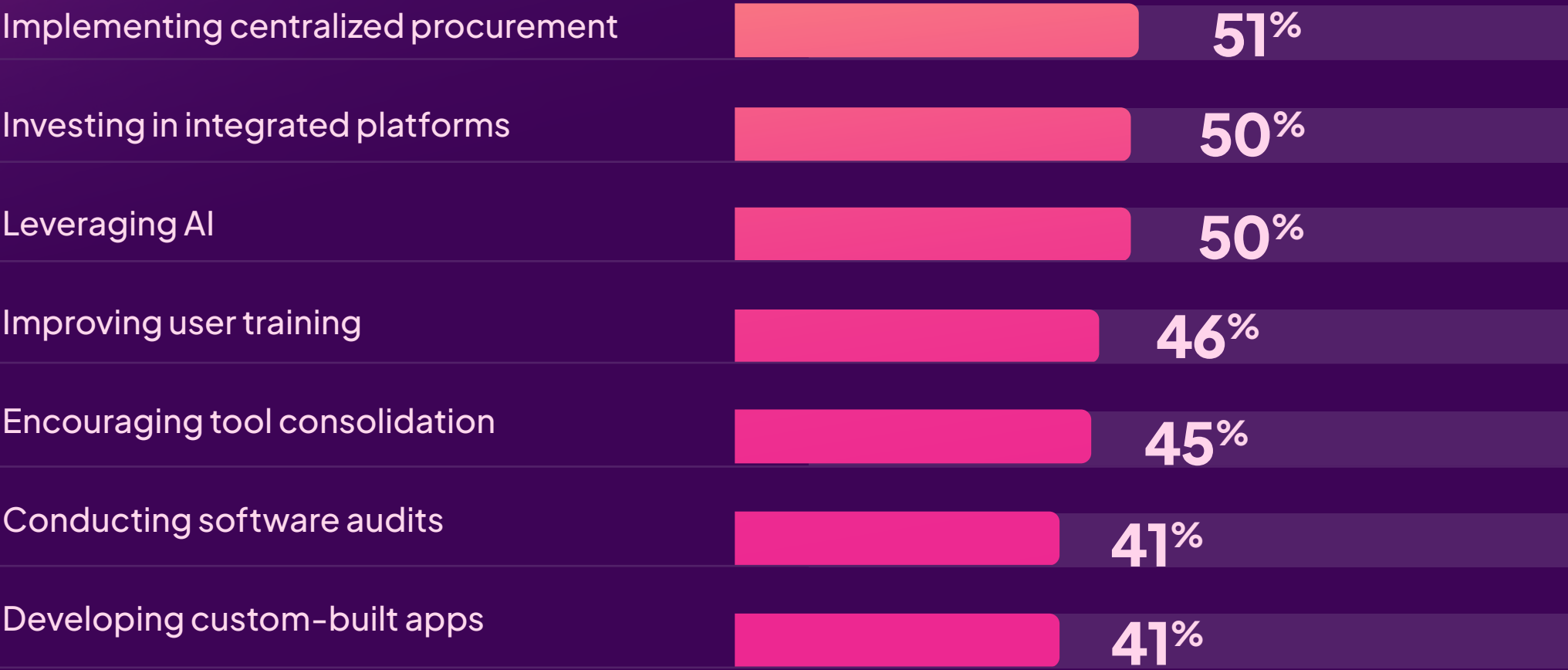
TO AUTOMATE  
INTEGRATIONS  
and improve workflow  
efficiency

69%

TO RECOMMEND  
THE RIGHT TOOLS



Top approaches to slow the sprawl:



## The frame

Research found that **88% of US businesses plan to increase AI budgets in the next year**. But scaling that investment is proving difficult. Another report found that **72% of C-suite leaders say their company has faced at least one challenge on its journey to AI adoption**. Some of these barriers include power struggles, conflicts, silos, and more.

These growing pains reflect a broader challenge: businesses are investing in tools faster than they can orchestrate them. As companies race to modernize, many are left managing a patchwork of SaaS solutions that hinder, rather than help, efficiency. Without unified strategies or scalable AI implementation, the promise of productivity will continue to get lost in the sprawl.

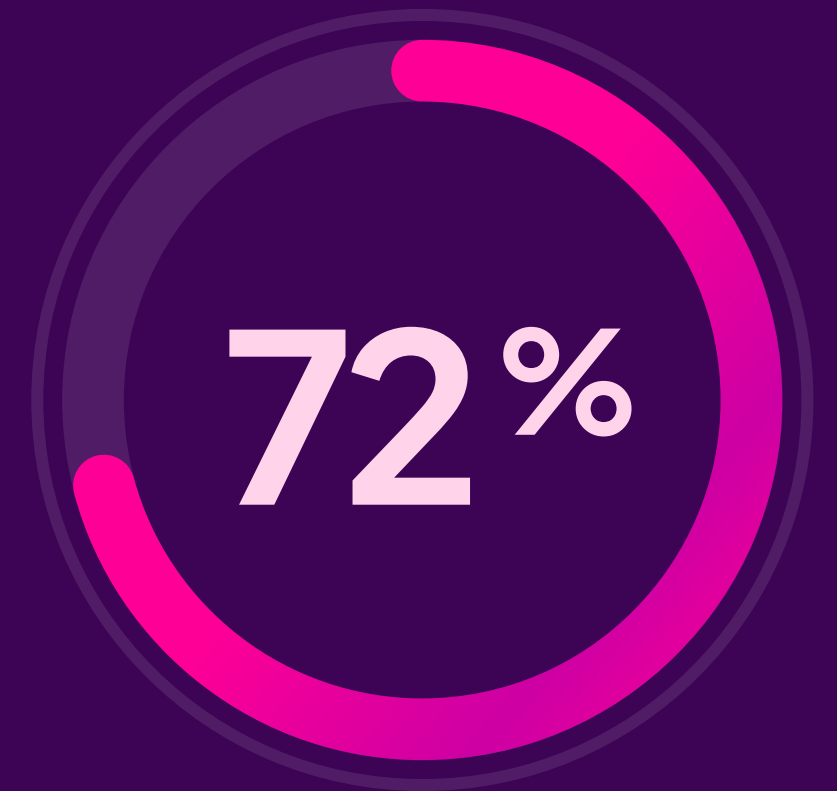
## The snapshot

American businesses thrive on choice. But when it comes to SaaS, too much freedom has led to silos. With sprawling app portfolios, lack of integration, and rising IT spending, many mid-market organizations are feeling the cost of unchecked growth. Yet the tide may be turning. As AI and automation adoption rise and tool counts begin to drop, U.S. companies are starting to trade expansion for efficiency, signaling a shift toward smarter, more sustainable SaaS strategies.

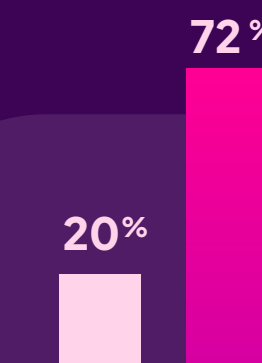


**“The era of unchecked software growth is ending. U.S. businesses are realizing that innovation doesn’t come from adding more tools — it comes from connecting and optimizing what they already have. As SaaS sprawl strains budgets, slows operations, and fractures the customer experience, IT leaders are turning the page. They’re harnessing AI, integrated platforms, and smarter strategies to transform complexity into clarity. The future belongs to those that can orchestrate their technology with precision, unlocking efficiency, resilience, and new opportunities for growth.”**

ASHLEY NICOL, REGIONAL VICE PRESIDENT – AMER  
NINTEX



of American companies have adopted AI in at least one business function



up from **just 20%** five years ago



# United Kingdom: Mind the (integration) gap

## The full picture

Software investment is [top priority for the Brits](#) this year, followed by AI. Meanwhile, as UK organizations continue to prioritize software purchases, many are adding tools without proper integration. Of the 93% of mid-market UK organizations that have integrated SaaS tools into their tech stacks, only 34% say they are entirely integrated.

Still, despite low levels of integration, nearly a third **(31%) are using 51–100 SaaS tools** and more than a quarter **(26%) are adding new SaaS tools every two to three weeks**.

**Growing tech stacks and lagging integration have led to real business impacts.**

Fortunately, the data indicates that UK organizations are aware of the disconnect in their tech stacks — with 61% considering tackling software sprawl a high priority. Nearly half (49%) of mid-market organizations are actively leveraging AI to tackle their sprawl. At the same time, a similar number (48%) are encouraging their teams to consolidate software onto platforms.

## The frame

The United Kingdom is making bold moves to become a global leader in artificial intelligence and digital innovation. Government-backed strategies like the [AI Opportunities Action Plan](#) aim to boost public computing power twentyfold by 2030 and create AI growth zones to attract private investment.

Yet despite these ambitions, many UK organizations — especially SMEs — struggle to adopt emerging



technologies. High implementation costs, limited awareness, and skill gaps remain significant barriers. A techUK report estimates that improving digital adoption among SMEs could [add £232 billion to the UK economy](#), highlighting both the opportunity and the challenge.

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**Bridging this gap is crucial for the UK to fully realize its digital potential and ensure that organizations can effectively integrate new technologies into their operations.**

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## The snapshot

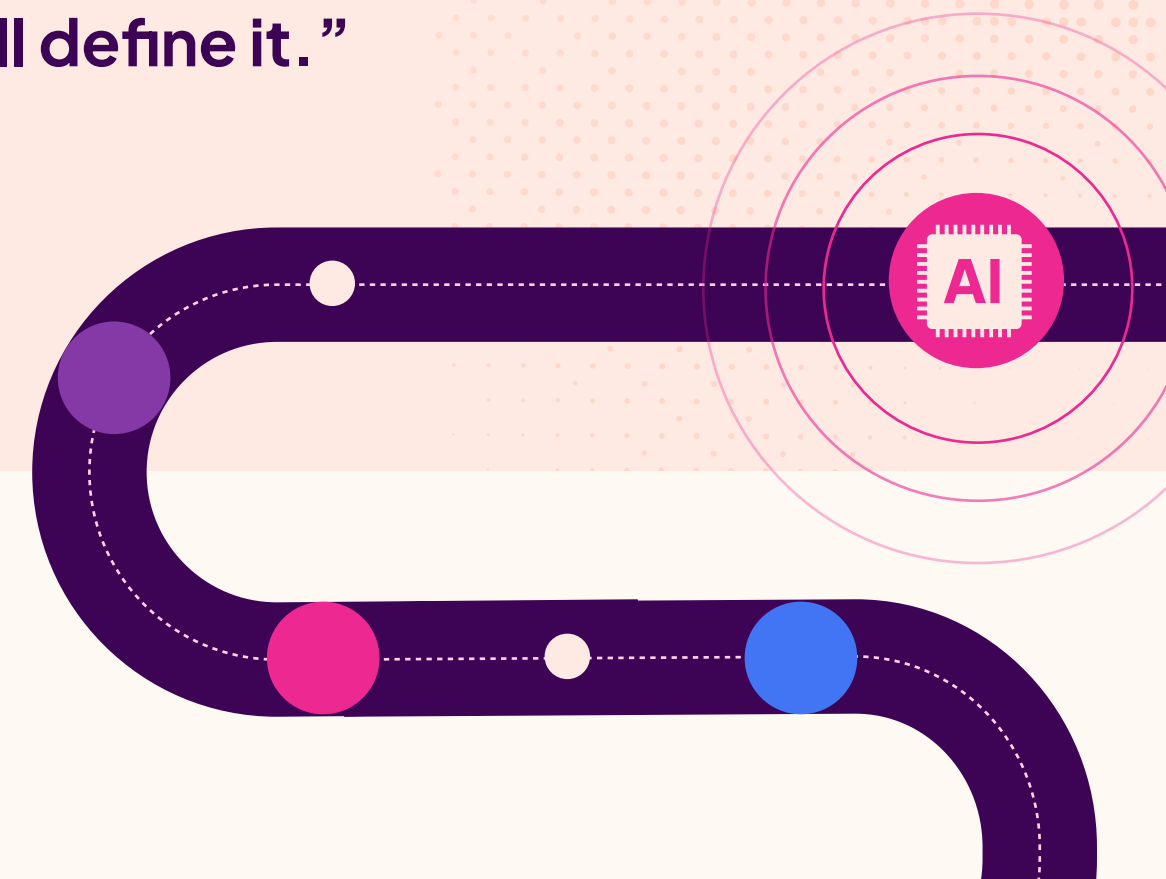
Despite claiming integration, most mid-market businesses are operating with fragmented systems, ballooning toolsets, and rising data chaos. The pressure is building, but so is the response, with more companies turning to AI and platform consolidation to regain control and close the gap.

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**“The UK’s race to invest in software and AI is rewriting the rules of competition — but speed without structure is a losing game. British organizations have recognized that a sprawling, disconnected tech stack isn’t just an IT problem; it’s a barrier to innovation, growth, and resilience. The real leaders of 2025 won’t be the ones with the most tools, but the ones with the smartest, most connected foundations. It’s promising to see a shift underway: organizations that consolidate, integrate, and harness AI to tame complexity will not only survive the digital era — they will define it.”**

ROBERT EKSTROM, REGIONAL VICE PRESIDENT - EMEA

NINTEX



# Australia: AI on the front foot, sprawl dragging the chain

## The full picture

In recent years, Australian organizations have [embraced everything as a service \(XaaS\) models](#) to capture added flexibility, scalability, and cost-efficiency. However, an unintended outcome of this approach is mounting software sprawl. On average, **49% of Australian organizations have between 51 and 200 SaaS tools in their tech stacks**.

For Australian organizations, software sprawl is not just an IT issue — it is having a material impact on business operations. When asked to estimate the financial impact of software sprawl, 91% of mid-market organizations reported a moderate-to-major financial impact.

Beyond the financial strain software sprawl is causing, it is also leading to significant operational challenges — 41% of Australian organizations said it was leading to security

and compliance risks, 39% reported increased manual data entry and duplication, while just over a third (34%) said sprawl was leading to difficulty in scaling their business. Not only is software sprawl impacting the financial performance of Australian organizations, but it's actively holding their businesses back.

The main threat for Australian organizations appears to be a lack of integration in their software stacks.

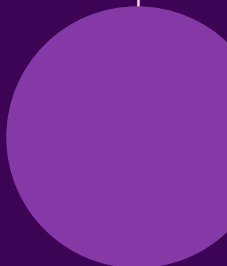
**93%** OF RESPONDENTS say that addressing sprawl should be a top priority.

But at the same time, more than half (58%) say that their current process orchestration are ineffective

FINANCIAL IMPACT

91%

reported a MODERATE-TO-MAJOR FINANCIAL IMPACT



OPERATIONAL IMPACT

41%

said it was leading to SECURITY AND COMPLIANCE RISKS



93%

93% of respondents say that addressing sprawl should be a top priority

58%

But 58% say that their current processes are ineffective in ensuring seamless operations

in ensuring seamless operations across their different SaaS applications—the highest among all countries surveyed. Half of Australian organizations are also adding a new SaaS tool to their tech stacks every two to four weeks. So, if the data tells us that Australian IT leaders want to address software sprawl and are facing real challenges, then why haven't many organizations found a solution? One reason may be a lack of IT resources. The survey found that **77% of organizations place software sprawl management responsibility solely on the IT department**. If IT teams are solely responsible but lack the people, budget, and other resources needed to overhaul SaaS stacks, organizations will likely continue to face challenges with sprawl.

**The good news is that Australian organizations are quick to use emerging technologies to tackle their problems.**

The data found that Australian IT leaders are at the forefront of AI adoption, viewing it as a pivotal solution to the nation's productivity challenges. Specifically, **92% of Australian mid-market organizations report that they are using AI to combat sprawl.**



**“In Australia, software sprawl isn't just a thorn in IT's side — it's tripping up entire businesses. Budgets are bleeding, compliance risks are piling up, and scaling feels like pushing a boulder uphill. Nearly every mid-market organization knows it's a problem, but with IT teams stretched thin, fixing it can feel like trying to bail out a sinking ship with a teacup. The good news? AI is stepping up fast. Australian IT leaders aren't waiting around — they're putting AI to work, fighting back and turning software sprawl into a launchpad for growth.”**

KEITH PAYNE, REGIONAL VICE PRESIDENT – APAC  
NINTEX



## The frame

Australia’s SaaS sprawl struggles are accompanied by continued challenges around efficiency and productivity. According to the [Australian Productivity Commission](#), the country is experiencing a productivity crisis, with the latest data showing that labor **productivity declined by over 6%** between March 2022 and June 2023.

Many experts attribute this decline to productivity–stifling regulations, a shift toward a service–based economy, and growing skill shortages and talent gaps.

Current projections indicate that the country **needs 1.3 million additional tech workers by 2030**.

These talent and productivity pressures come at a time when digital transformation is accelerating. As organizations adopt more SaaS tools to fill capability gaps, many are inadvertently creating a disconnected

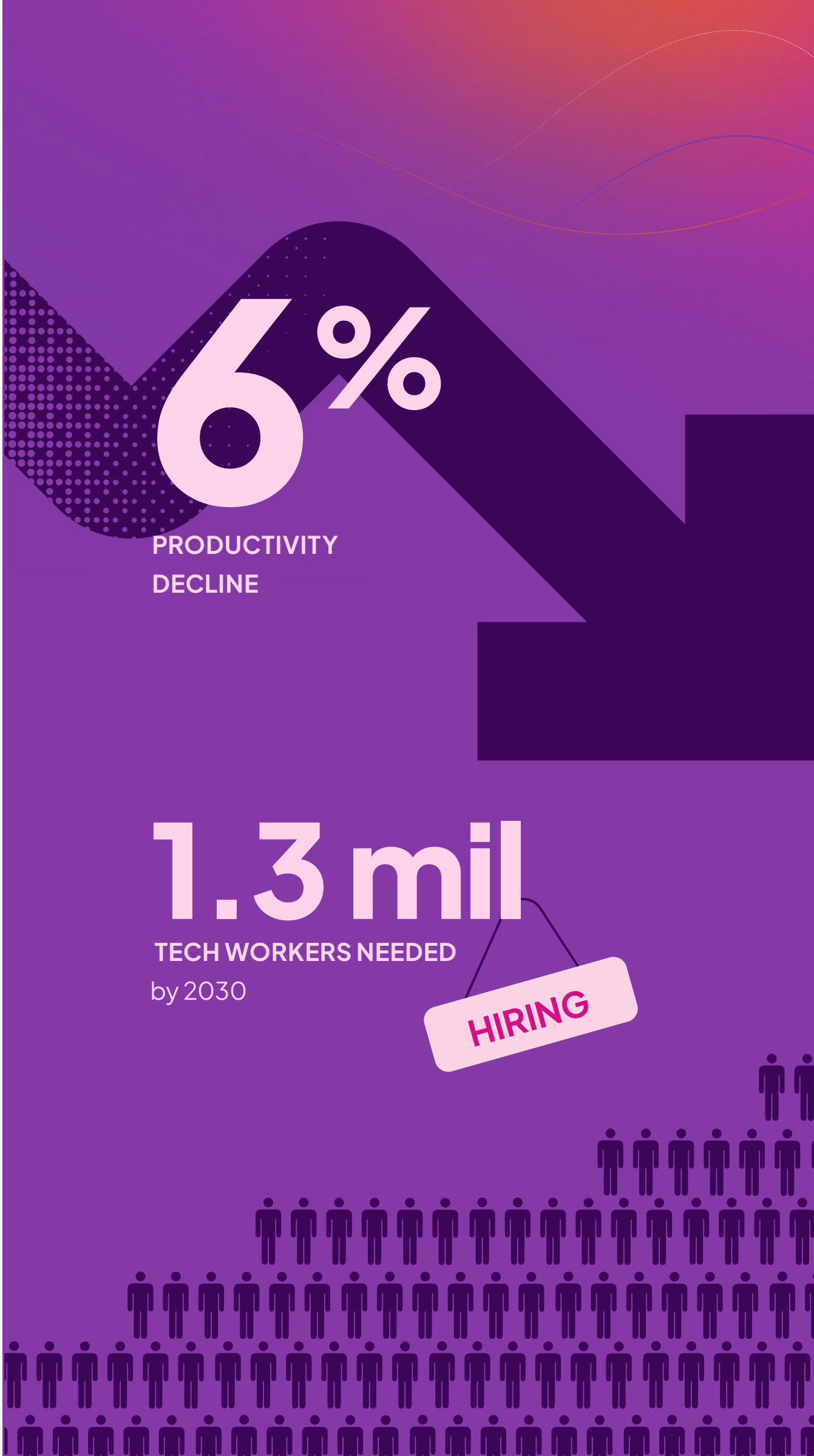
tech environment that slows teams down. Only 34% of Australian companies provide training to help employees use their software more effectively. Without proper onboarding or continuous education, tools quickly become shelfware, prompting teams to seek out alternatives and further fueling the sprawl.

ONLY  
**34%** of Australian companies  
PROVIDE TRAINING TO HELP  
EMPLOYEES USE SOFTWARE

Without better orchestration, reskilling, and smarter platform strategies, SaaS sprawl may deepen the inefficiencies businesses are trying to solve.

## The snapshot

In Australia, the real threat to business isn’t what’s lurking in the bush — it’s the growing complexity of software sprawl. Many IT teams are stretched thin and expected to manage sprawling tech stacks without the resources to fix them. While Aussie organizations still have a lot of hard yakka to do when it comes to orchestration, the rapid embrace of AI signals a strong desire to tackle sprawl once and for all.



# United Arab Emirates: Dreaming in AI, drowning in data

## The full picture

Across the Middle East, governments and organizations are racing toward a digital future. From [Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030](#) to [UAE's AI Strategy 2031](#), national visions are driving ambitious initiatives to modernize economies, improve public services, and unlock new growth opportunities.

These initiatives have a common goal: **to become a global leader in AI.**

However, many organizations in the region still rely on a disconnected technology stack and inefficient

processes for their day-to-day operations. AI can't succeed in a vacuum — it needs structured data and efficient processes as a strong foundation. Data tells us that many UAE organizations don't have that foundation for success.

The survey found that **60% of UAE organizations are using 201–300 SaaS tools.**

78% of IT leaders claim that their SaaS tools are integrated, but only 31% report full integration across their hundreds of applications. Similarly, 82% of mid-market IT leaders report that sprawl consumes a moderate to major portion of IT budgets.

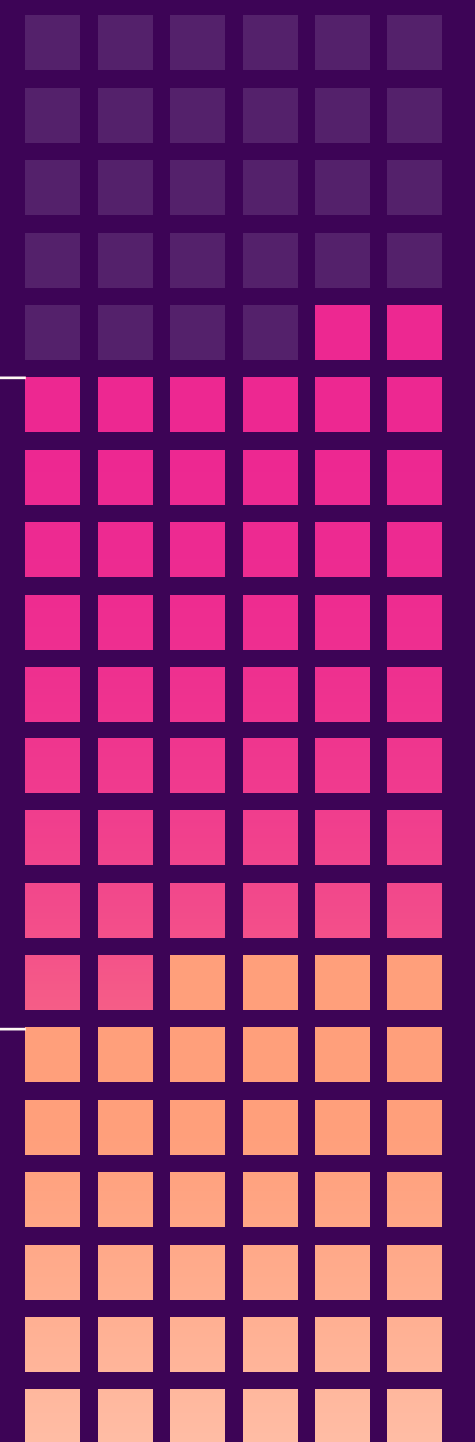
78%

Claim their  
**SAAS TOOLS ARE  
INTEGRATED**

YET, ONLY

31%

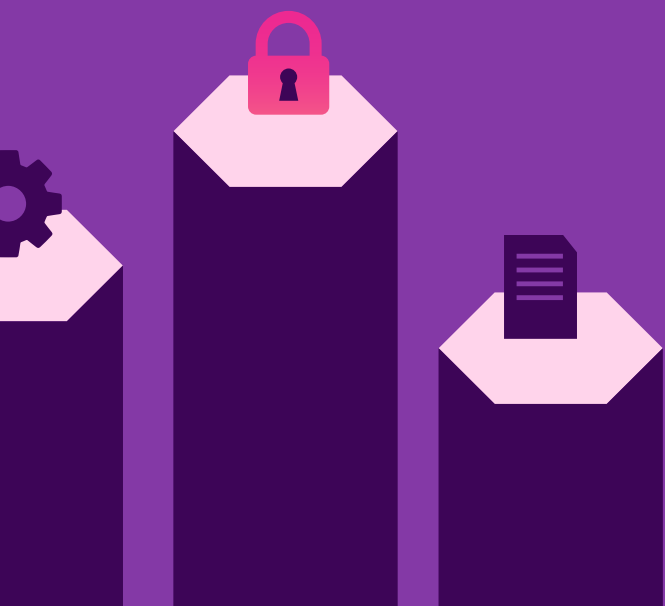
**REPORT FULL  
INTEGRATION**  
across hundreds of  
applications





**39%**  
STRUGGLE WITH  
ANALYTICS

**38%**  
FACE DATA  
INCONSISTENCIES



**35%**  
REPORT SILOED  
SYSTEMS

“

“The Middle East stands at the threshold of a new era, guided by bold national visions like the UAE’s AI Strategy 2031. The ambitions are clear: to lead the world in innovation, technology, and opportunity. But true leadership in AI demands more than investment and aspiration — it requires a strong foundation of an orchestration platform that connects disparate systems, harmonizes data, and streamlines complex processes. Today, many organizations are navigating a digital landscape burdened by fragmentation and inefficiency. To become the leaders in AI, we must build integrated, agile environments where AI can thrive, which begins with optimizing processes and creating a foundation of automation.”

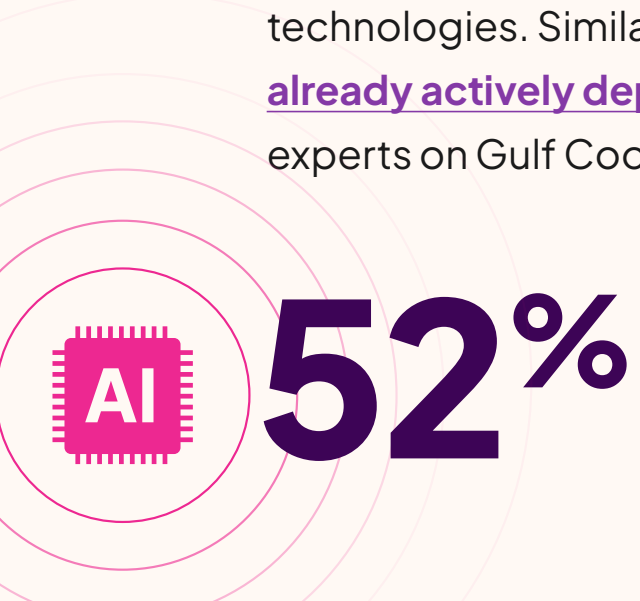
AMR FOUAD, DIRECTOR, SOLUTIONS ENGINEER  
NINTEX

# The large amount of sprawl and lack of SaaS integration correlate to data management challenges.

Any efforts to tackle sprawl and data challenges are also being hindered by ineffective process orchestration methods. **61% of organizations say that their current process orchestration efforts are not effective.** And, despite aspirations for AI leadership, very few (35%) UAE organizations are leveraging AI to combat software sprawl challenges today.

## The frame

AI adoption is the main goal for many UAE organizations. KPMG reports that the **UAE is emerging as a leader in AI adoption**, with businesses rapidly integrating advanced technologies. Similarly, **52% of UAE companies are already actively deploying generative AI**. However, experts on Gulf Cooperation Council countries believe



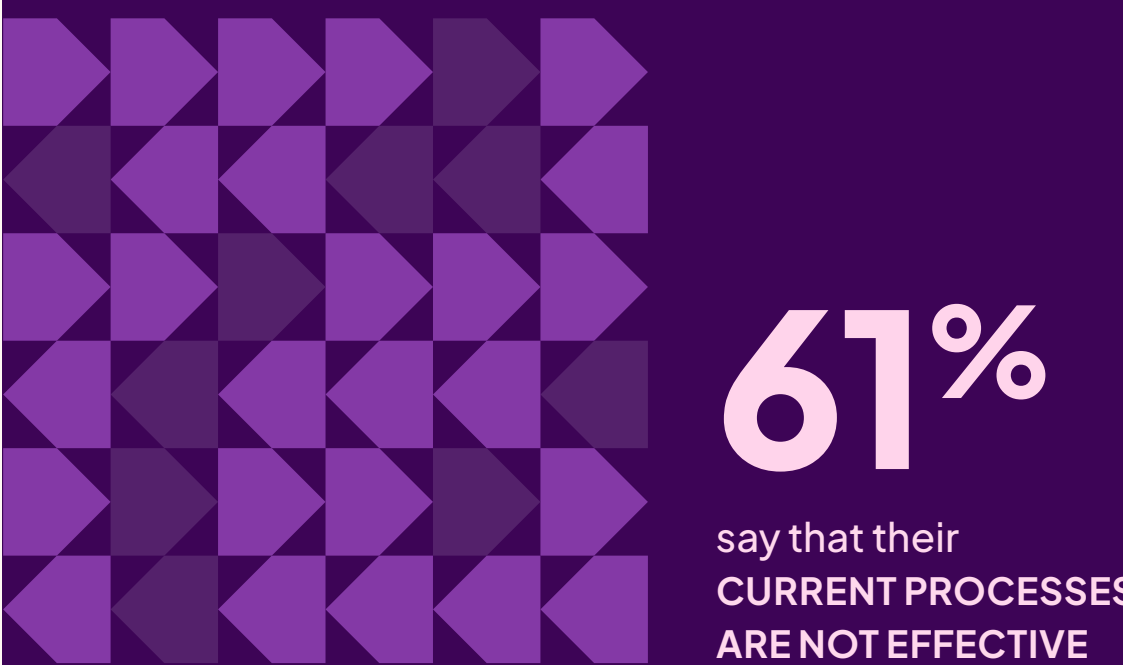
**OF UAE COMPANIES**  
are actively deploying  
generative AI

that **challenges to AI adoption persist**, specifically around access to high-quality data pipelines, building a robust technology foundation, and integrating key systems.

These barriers highlight a deeper issue confronting fast-growing digital economies: swift adoption without a cohesive strategy. As UAE organizations expand their tech stacks to incorporate AI, many risk introducing overlapping platforms and fragmented tools. Without unified processes and streamlined operations, the rate of innovation could surpass the capacity to manage it — transforming AI ambition into operational overload.

## The snapshot

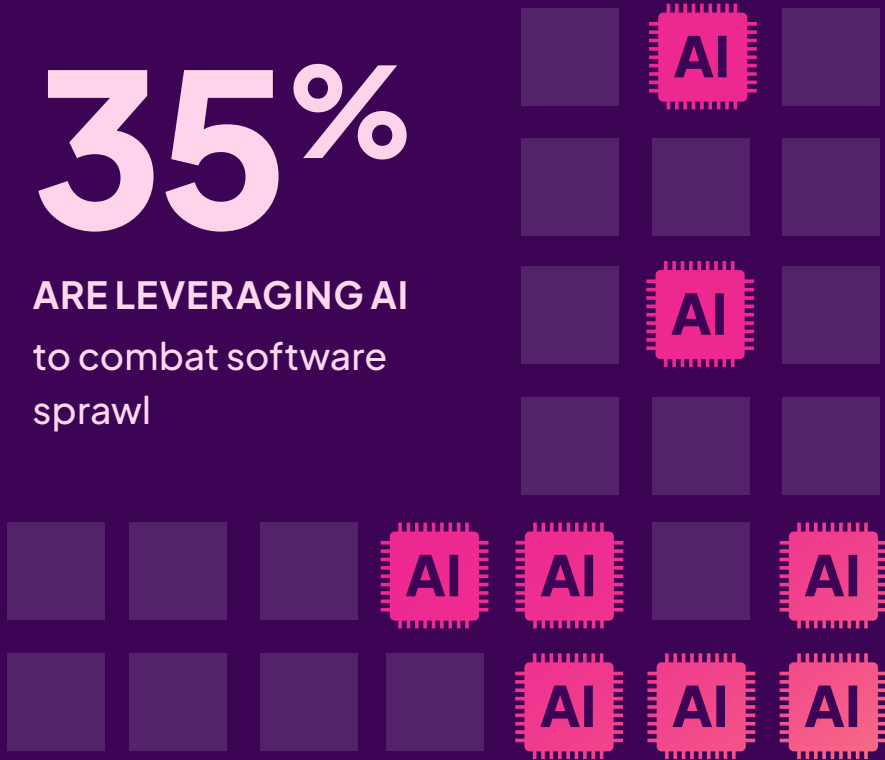
The UAE is sprinting toward an AI-powered future — but many organizations are running on disconnected systems and outdated processes. With hundreds of SaaS tools in play and limited integration between them, the foundation for AI success remains shaky. Despite bold national ambitions, most organizations are still grappling with data chaos, inefficient workflows, and underused AI capabilities. To tackle sprawl and jumpstart AI innovations, UAE organizations need to start with their processes and optimizing the flow of work and data throughout their teams.



YET, ONLY

**35%**

**ARE LEVERAGING AI**  
to combat software  
sprawl







## So, if efficiency is the question, process automation must be the answer.

If you look at today's post-pandemic economy, efficiency has become essential for business survival and growth amid tightening budgets, increased competition, and evolving expectations. Companies must maximize returns on existing investments while streamlining operations.

Many businesses have inadvertently created disconnected tech stacks that need consolidation rather than expansion. Process automation offers a solution by enabling technology consolidation without disrupting established workflows.

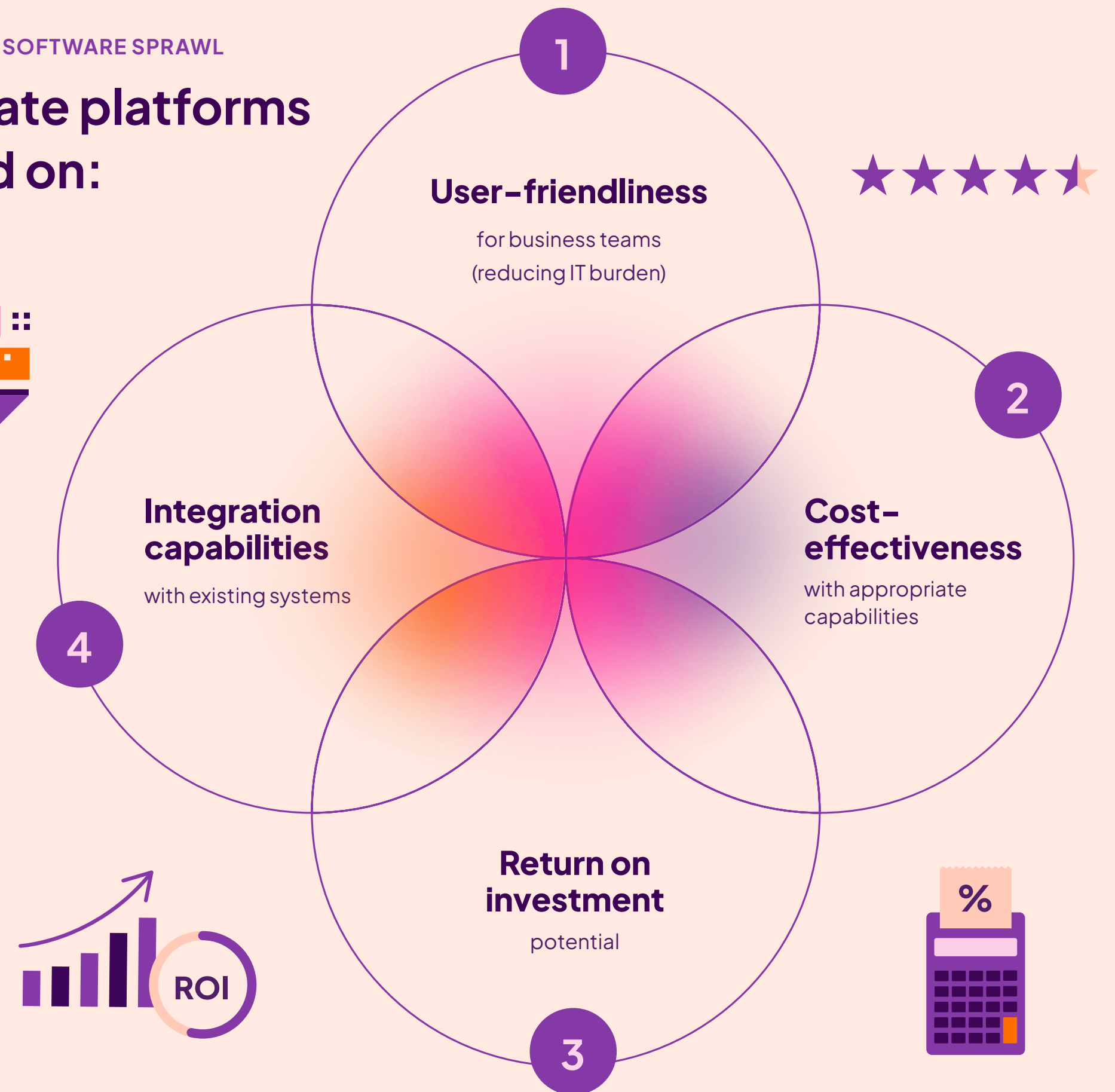
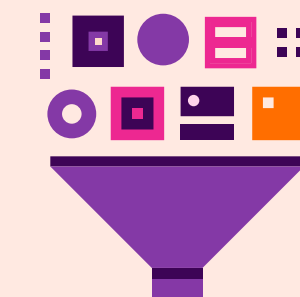
Unlike simple task automation, process automation provides comprehensive streamlining across departments and organizations. Modern platforms offer end-to-end solutions that identify inefficiencies, orchestrate workflows, and enable custom app development to connect technologies and people seamlessly.

## The ideal solution should connect disparate systems, bringing workflows and data together

while addressing organizational inefficiencies without adding costly complexity.

TO MANAGE SOFTWARE SPRAWL

## Evaluate platforms based on:



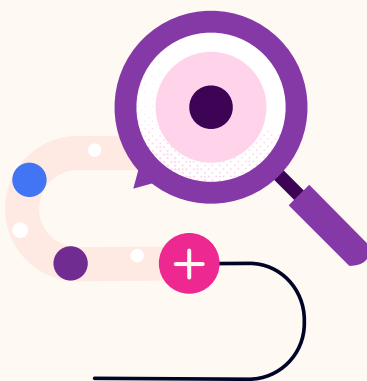


## Nintex: Your solution to SaaS sprawl

**Nintex is a single platform for process automation, app development, and AI.**

By combining the best in process management, workflow orchestration, and application development, organizations can build custom solutions using Nintex’s end-to-end, AI-powered platform. These solutions enable organizations to offload SaaS tools and leverage applications that are built on top of optimized workflows and processes – maximizing efficiency.

At Nintex, we think about these three components in the following way:

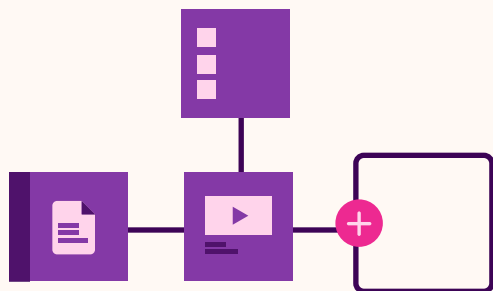


### Process

Businesses must understand how work and data move through the organization. Process management provides the capabilities needed to identify and manage critical workflows.

ANSWERS THE QUESTION:

What are the processes, data and interfaces that need to be improved?

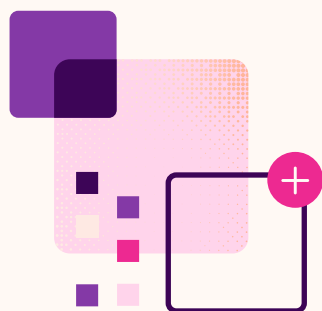


### Workflow

Organizations need to be able to orchestrate and automate at the basic task levels between people, data, and systems. With workflow orchestration and agentic AI, organizations can unlock the efficiency trapped across their resources.

ANSWERS THE QUESTION:

How does work move through the application?



### App Development

Part of the reason to consolidate SaaS software into custom-built applications is to improve usability across an entire process or use case. Low-code application development provides the capabilities needed to build engaging experiences — everything from forms to chatbots — without placing an additional burden on the team.

ANSWERS THE QUESTION:

How do we build the exact application we need every time?



## Whether you’re looking to:

Connect your tech stack, optimize workflows, leverage AI to drive efficiency, or use a platform to build custom solutions, Nintex can help you tame the sprawl and build solutions that enable a better way to get work done.

Learn more about how you can control  
SaaS spawl with AI and automation

Nintex.com

The research was conducted by Censuswide, with 2,000 senior information technology (IT) leaders across numerous industries in Australia, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom, and the United States. The survey was conducted between March 27 and April 2, 2025. Censuswide abides by and employs members of the Market Research Society, which is based on the ESOMAR principles. Censuswide is also a member of the British Polling Council.

## More resources:

Check out the Nintex  
resource center

for extensive process  
automationand AI content

Discover more

See pre-built  
solutions

ready for you to use today

See solutions in action

Read the Nintex blog

for process automation  
updates

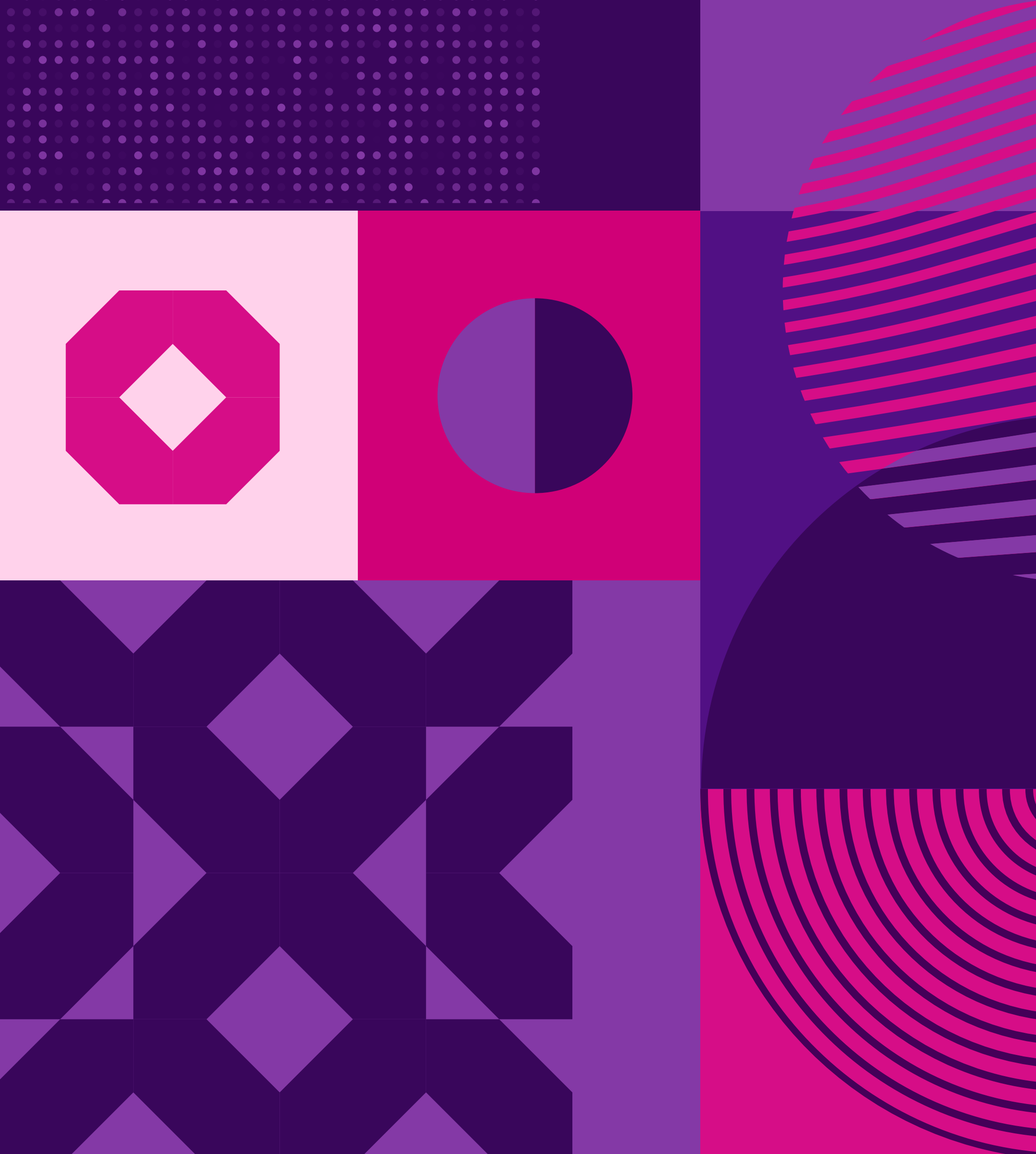
Read the blog

Schedule a demo

to see AI at work

See what’s possible





Nintex, the possibility engine™, helps companies unlock the power of endless possibilities. Today more than 8,000 public and private sector organizations across 90 countries turn to the Nintex platform to automate how work gets done, remove friction from business processes, and unlock the full potential of their people.

Learn more about how Nintex and its global partner network are propelling people, work, and business forward at [nintex.com](https://nintex.com).